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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0487

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 000262

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DEPT FOR PM/WRA (BAKER) AND EUR/AGS (SAINT ANDRE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/05/2017

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: COOPERATION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS: AUSTRIAN RESPONSE

REF: STATE 6667

Classified By: Acting DCM Gregory E. Phillips. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) EconPolOff discussed reftel demarche on February 2 with Alexander Benedict from the Austrian Foreign Ministry's Department of Arms Control, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation. Benedict said Austria is very concerned about the negative humanitarian impact of cluster munitions (CMs) and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Austria, along with 27 other states, favors the start of negotiations for a new and stronger protocol on CMs, in addition to the existing CCW Protocols on CMs and ERW. The new protocol would prohibit (1) the production and use of "unreliable" CMs that cause civilian casualties and (2) the use of CMs within concentrations of civilian populations. Austria discussed this idea, Benedict said, at last year's Third Review Conference of State Parties to the CCW. He said that government experts will discuss this idea further during the June 19-22 meeting on ERW. Austria, according to Benedict, would prefer to negotiate a new protocol within the CCW framework, but is open to "outsourcing" the negotiations if there is no agreement within the CCW. He said he hoped that the U.S. would join in and support this effort.

¶2. (C) Austria, according to Benedict, intends to actively participate in the negotiations at the Oslo conference, which it hopes will create momentum for a new protocol. Officials from the Austrian MFA and Austria's mission in Geneva will attend.

¶3. (C) Comment. Benedict was knowledgeable about US concerns regarding the upcoming Oslo conference, but lukewarm to the idea of opening a military-to-military dialog on CMs. A military-to-military dialog is not likely to change Austrian policy on the issue, which remains firm and committed to further restricting the production and use of CMs. End Comment.
Kilner